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Christianity and Society

COMMUNICATING THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

by

CHARLES D. KEAN

THE WEAKNESS AND THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

by

GEORGE E. BEILBY, JR.

THE LOGIC OF ANTI-SECULARISM

by

JOHN I. DANIEL

EDITORIALS

BOOK REVIEWS

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THE FALL CONFERENCE

The annual Fall Conference of the Fellowship was held in New York on October 12–13, 1950. The theme of the daytime sessions was "The Christian Family." Will Herberg spoke on a theology of the family, Mrs. Ursula Niebuhr dealt with the problem of the Christian family, and Archie Hargraves led a discussion on the Christian discipline of family life. The evening sessions were devoted to reports on Japan, by John Bennett, and on China, by a recently returned Presbyterian missionary educator, Dr. Stanley Smith.

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CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

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DITORIALS

w Light on the Old Struggle

The outbreak of hostilities in Korea has rified an aspect of our international uation which we should have known n without this costly illumination. It now quite clear that the Russians do t want a general war with us. They want her to test the strength of the non-mmunist world, politically and militarily, erever they detect weak points.

t was the thesis of the military leadership t we must prepare for the final conflict h Russia. Korea was written off be-se it did not seem important for the tegy of the final conflict. Then sud-ly it was realized that Korea was very portant for the indeterminable conflict which the Russians are engaging us. y should the Russians be itching for all-out conflict with us in which our lustrial and technical superiority would tremendous? Why should they not her engage us in a world-wide struggle ce-meal, in which they could exploit atever political advantages they pos-sed? We should have known that this s the strategy for many reasons, including fact that communism, unlike fascism, es primarily on methods of political spiracy rather than military power to n its ends. The fear of the military that Russians were bent on an all-out strug-is another case of generals fighting a vious war all over again. Communism l Nazism are very much alike but also very different. We had better note the differences.

One of the differences is that communism still appeals to millions of desperately poor people all over the world, particularly in Asia. In Europe the communists have, for the time at least, lost the political battle. They can take Europe only by military force. It was therefore very shrewd to transfer the center of hostilities to Asia. The venture in Korea does not require the Russians to show their hand too obviously and it requires us to show ours very obviously. We have to counter this military threat successfully or lose prestige in Asia. But even then our military success must be bought at the price of appearing in Asian minds primarily as a military power.

Even if we succeed in Korea there is nothing to prevent the Russians from pushing the Chinese communists into a war in Indo-China where we are embarrassingly involved with a very unpopular French regime whose puppet Emperor spends his days on the French Riviera. Those who oppose him were originally nationalists, but now they are pretty well tied up with the communist cause. Everywhere in Asia we are confronted with moral and political embarrassment. The vaunted virtue of the high standard of the "American way of life" is an irrelevance in Asia, if not an affront. Asiatic nations are either seeking national liberation or are sinking into social chaos after having found it. We are to

them the symbols of the white man's arrogance and Russia has succeeded in posing as the champion of colonial peoples. We are embarrassed in Indo-China because we did not help them gain their independence from France. And we are embarrassed in Indonesia where we forced the Dutch to grant independence, perhaps prematurely and too absolutely. At any rate the Indonesian government is not safe against communist rebellion. Nor for that matter are the Philippines safe, despite our proud tutelage in democracy for a half century. The fact is that the colonial system in Asia is obviously breaking up without available resources for stable government. In India, while Nehru views our conflict with communism from a somewhat lofty moral perch, he is himself involved in a very serious conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir; and Indian economic convalescence is retarded by vast military expenditures.

The communists are undoubtedly fanatics; but they are less hysterical than the Nazis. They have been shrewd enough to engage us in the kind of conflict which places us at a tremendous disadvantage. And there are evidences that the hysteria is more on our side than on theirs. A general war may of course develop. We may stumble into it by mistakes on either side. But on the whole the atomic conflict which we feared is not an imminent peril. The peril which we confront is a long-drawn-out struggle, lasting decade upon decade and requiring every possible moral and political resource of the so-called "free" world.

Our Resources for the Struggle

The perils to which we are exposed are the more disquieting because it is now apparent that we are, as a nation, not mature enough to bear the brunt of this struggle. Economic power has given us a leadership in the free world for which our resources of wisdom are not adequate. Consider the irrelevance of the advice which we receive from both our professional realists and our professional idealists. The realists either predict an inevitable war or counsel us to start a preventive one. The pacifists have a curiously similar interpretation of the relation of the present struggle to a general war. They implore us to come to terms with Russia before the present struggle grows into a general war. Obviously we could not come to terms with Russia at the present moment except at a price which would turn the whole of Asia over to communism.

The realists on the other hand want us to present an even more military front to Asia than we are now forced to do. Most Republicans still want us to help the miserable remnant of Chinese nationalism on Formosa to fight its way back to the mainland, though it has long since been obvious that, whatever Chinese communism may be, the forces of the Kuomintang have no more support among the Chinese people.

Some of the non-pacifist idealists speak incessantly of supporting "democratic" forces instead of reaction, as if that were a simple choice. They tax our government with the support of the "reactionary" Rhee government in Korea. But the Rhee government was the incorporation of the Korean dream of independence for a half century. It turned out to be, when it came to power, inept, venal and ineffective. To cover the inadequacies of this government with the term "reaction" is to define in simple class terms vast political confusion which can not be so simply defined. The government in Indo-China is obviously "reactionary". The government in Korea symbolizes rather the difficulties of awakening Asiatic nations, long held in tutelage and incapable of effective self-government overnight. This is equally true of the governments of the Philippines, Burma, and Indonesia.

If we are to defeat communism in Asia and the world a political wisdom and virtue are required which transcend the slogans and shibboleths of the right and left, of the realists and the idealists. The problems of Asia can not be simply solved either by "self-determination" or by an anachronistic

fort to preserve colonial rule. If this prob-
n is to be solved, the United Nations
ust become not merely an agency for
int military defense against aggression but
great joint enterprise in colonial tutelage.
oth the military and political threats of
mmunism throughout the world require
unity among the free nations, and a moral
d economic discipline which has never
eviously been achieved except in situa-
ons of overt conflict. We may have the
oral resources for this kind of conflict.
ut certainly our own nation has not yet
oved its capacities.

he Peril of Hysteria

Perhaps the most disquieting evidence of
r lack of maturity is the increasing anti-
mmunist hysteria in this country. As
is is written the senate has just passed,
th only seven dissenting votes, a law
signed to suppress communism. The law
perils more than one constitutional lib-
y and abounds in such silly provisions as
e registration of all members of the com-
unist party. As Senator Lehman of New
rk, one of the few opponents of the bill,
served, the law is based upon the foolish
sumption that a totally submerged ice-
rg is less dangerous than a partially
bmerged one.

City councils all over the country are
ing with one another in passing restrictive
gislation prohibiting the dissemination of
mmunist literature and the holding of
mmunist meetings. An actress has lost
r job on television because a noted and
sterical anti-communist "society matron"
sely accused her of communist sympa-
es. The University of California has
en in an uproar for months because the
ard of Trustees sought to treat the
ulty as so many errand boys and sought
impose an anti-communist oath which
olated the dignity of scholarship. Re-
ntly a minor official in Washington was
iled before a loyalty board and accused
subscribing to the monthly reports of
Consumers Union," reports which contain
luable advice on what kind of automo-
biles, soap or lawn mowers a consumer had best purchase. So the dismal story runs.

What does this hysteria mean? Does it not suggest that a nation which is physically very powerful is spiritually very weak? Does this hysteria not betoken a remarkable lack of confidence in ourselves and in each other? If we are an army how can we function if we spend half of our time accusing each other of treachery? How can a nation with a smaller communist movement per capita than any modern nation become so obsessed with the peril of treachery?

Added to the hysteria of fear about communism as an internal peril are the unbalanced conceptions of foreign policy presented by some Republican leaders and some army officials. Secretary of the Navy Mathews called for a preventive war. Governor Dewey gave it as his opinion that war with Russia was inevitable. Harold Stassen thought that it would be a bright idea to deliver an ultimatum to Russia and warn her that she would be attacked on the occasion of any further attack upon a small nation, even if no Russian strength was obviously involved. We may be grateful that administration policy, as distinguished from that of minor officials and political opponents, has remained remarkably sane. But it can not be denied that the public hysteria has greatly circumscribed the freedom of maneuver which the government ought to have in dealing with the communist peril, particularly in Asia.

Some of this hysteria is obviously a way of escaping from the seriousness of the issues confronting us by reducing them to simpler terms. Communism is obviously conspiratorial. If we could convince ourselves that we need only to guard against conspiracy, we could close our eyes to the more complex issues which we confront. Part of the hysteria reveals the spiritual weaknesses of our whole culture. The "democratic" and "liberal" culture of which we are so proud has fed so long upon simple historical promises, securities, and hopes, that it is quite unprepared to face the frustrations, insecurities, and disappointments which are

our lot. And it will continue to be unprepared for decades to come. Some of the hysteria represents a frustrated sense of omnipotence in modern man. We thought ourselves masters of our destiny and now we find ourselves involved in vast currents of history which we can not control. We seek to hide the impotence of even a very powerful nation by the suggestion that some one made a mistake somewhere or that some official was disloyal to his trust. Thus we persuade ourselves that the course of Chinese history might have been altered if the nationalist government had been given more guns. The failure to do this must be ascribed to communist influence in the State department. Among other things this immature nation must learn that even a very powerful nation is not Lord God Almighty.

All modern nations, great and small, are involved in the most far-reaching historical changes of human history. We have to make responsible decisions in this situation. But we must be as careful to recognize that historical destiny itself lies beyond our power as to know what lies in our power.

It is significant to note that sometimes hysteria seeks to reduce our responsibilities by defining our problems in too simple terms; and sometimes it ascribes power and responsibility to nations beyond their strength and competence. Thus, as a nation, we illustrate the twofold character of human sin generally. For sin always expresses itself either as an escape from the freedom and responsibility which God has given us or as a vainglorious overestimate of our power and freedom.

The cure of fear is faith. It is "perfect love" which "driveth out fear." Some of our difficulties arise from the general political immaturity of a nation too suddenly vaulted into a position of precarious international eminence. But some of our problems arise from a modern culture which has no anchor for its sense of the meaning of life except the idea of the goodness of man and the power of nations. If we have no faith in Him "who leadeth the blin in ways they know not of," and no sens of a power of Providence beyond the van ties of men, the tumult of our tragic ag simply overwhelms us.

Justice and Love

"A Christian," declared an eager youn participant in a symposium on Christianit and politics, "always considers the commo welfare before his own interest." Thi simple statement reveals a few of the weak nesses of moralistic Christianity in dealin with problems of justice. The statemen contains at least two errors; or perhaps on error and one omission.

The first error consists in defining Christian in terms which assume that con sistent selflessness is possible. No Christian even the most perfect, is able "always" t consider the common interest before hi own. At least he is not able to do i without looking at the common interes with eyes colored by his own ambitions. I complete selflessness were a simple possibil ity political justice could be quickly trans muted into perfect love; and all the fric tions, tensions, partial cooperations, an overt and covert conflicts could be elimi nated. If complete selflessness without a admixture of egoism were possible, man now irrelevant sermons and church resolu tions would become relevant. Unfortu nately there is no such possibility fo individual men; and perfect disinterested ness for groups and nations is even mor impossible.

The other error is one of omission. T set self-interest and the general welfare ir simple opposition is to ignore nine-tenth of the ethical issues which confront th consciences of men. For these are con cerned not so much with the problem o the self against the whole as with problem of the self in its relation to various types o "general welfare." "What do you mean b common interest?" retorted a shrewd busi ness man in the symposium referred to Does it mean the family or the nation? I

ave to chose between "my family" and y nation," is the Christian choice in- tably weighted in favor of the nation ce it is the larger community? And if choice is between "my" nation and ther nation, must the preference always for the other nation on the ground that cern for my own nation represents col- ive self-interest? Was the young pacifist alist right who insisted that if we had "selfish concern for our own civiliza- n" we could resolve the tension between selves and Russia, presumably by giving ral preference to a communist civiliza- n over our own?

uch questions as these reveal why Chris- n moralism has made such meager con- utions to the issues of justice in modern iety. Justice requires discriminate judg- nts between conflicting claims. A Chris- n justice will be particularly critical of claims of the self as against the claims he other, but it will not dismiss them of hand. Without this criticism all tice becomes corrupted into a refined m of self-seeking. But if the claims of self (whether individual or collective) not entertained, there is no justice at There is an ecstatic form of AGAPE ich defines the ultimate heroic possibili- of human existence (involving of course rtyrdom) but not the common possibili- of tolerable harmony of life with life.

nsofar as justice admits the claims of the it is something less than love. Yet it not exist without love and remain tice. For without the "grace" of love tice always degenerates into something than justice.

ut if justice requires that the interests the self be entertained, it also requires t they be resisted. Every realistic system justice must assume the continued power self-interest, particularly of collective -interest. It must furthermore assume t this power will express itself illegiti- tely as well as legitimately. It must refore be prepared to resist illegitimate -interest, even among the best men and the most just nations. A simple Christian moralism counsels men to be unselfish. A profounder Christian faith must encourage men to create systems of justice which will save society and themselves from their own selfishness.

But justice arbitrates not merely between the self and the other but between the competing claims upon the self by various "others." Justice seeks to determine what I owe my family as compared with my nation; or what I owe this segment as against that segment of a community. One of the strange moral anomalies of our times is that there are business men and men of affairs who have a more precise sense of justice in feeling their way through the endless relativities of human relations than professional teachers of morals. Practical experience has made them sensitive to the complex web of values and interests in which human decisions are reached, while the professional teachers of religion and morals deal with simple counters of black and white. This certainly is one of the reasons why the pulpit frequently seems so boring and irrelevant to the pew. At his worst the practical man of affairs is morally heedless and considers only his own interest, mistaking collective self-interest for selfless virtue. At his best he has been schooled in justice, while his teacher confuses the issue by moral distinctions which do not fit the complexities of life.

The realm of justice is also a realm of tragic choices, which are seldom envisaged in a type of idealism in which all choices are regarded as simple. Sometimes we must prefer a larger good to a smaller one, without the hope that the smaller one will be preserved in the larger one. Sometimes we must risk a terrible evil (such as an atomic war) in the hope of avoiding an imminent peril (such as subjugation to tyranny). Subsequent events may prove the risk to have been futile and the choice to have been wrong. If there is enough of a world left after such a wrong choice we will be taxed by the idealists for having made the wrong choice; and they will not know that they

escaped an intolerable evil by our choice. Even now we are taxed with the decision to resist Nazism, on the ground that the war against Nazism has left us in a sad plight. The present peril of communism seems to justify an earlier capitulation to Nazism. But since we are men and not God we could neither anticipate all the evils which would flow from our decision to resist Nazism; nor yet could we have capitulated to the immediate evil because another evil was foreshadowed.

The tragic character of our moral choic the contradiction between various equ values of our devotion, and the incomple ness in all our moral striving, prove that " in this life only we had hoped in Chri we are of all men most miserable." N possible historic justice is sufferable witho the Christian hope. But any illusion of world of perfect love without these impe fect harmonies of justice must ultimate turn the dream of love into a nightmare tyranny and injustice.

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COMMUNICATING THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

By CHARLES D. KEAN

The primary activity of the Christian urch is and always has been preaching e Gospel. It has no other enterprise quite essential as that of proclaiming the good ws of how man's predicament is over-me. The Gospel is preached both to se within the Christian fellowship for e purpose of deepening their awareness, aking more radical their conversion and urishing their faith, and to those outside e fellowship in order that they, too, may are the strength and peace which Chris-ns have discovered.

The world has always understood the imary activity of the Christian Church to preaching, but in a rather different se. It has understood the task to be at of moral exhortation, logical argu-nt, and the imparting of factual infor-tion. This is presented to those within e Church for the purpose of making m better informed and more conscien-us about their duties, and to those out-e the institution or movement for the rpose of encouraging them to affiliate.

The two activities are not the same. hile there is a definite place in the Chris-n scheme of things for the exploration moral issues and the thinking through the implications of the faith, these activi-s are secondary and derivative. But the ry fact that the Christian Gospel neces-ates one kind of encounter and the world pects a different thing entirely under-es our awareness that the task of com-unicating the Christian message is neither y nor self-evident.

The world thinks it knows already what e Church has to say. This means that it pects to hear nothing else, and, further-re, that it will tend to hear what it pects, regardless of what is actually said. ople expect to receive exhortation, either in the form of moral principles to which they are supposed to adhere, or duties which they should perform. And those who are reached are usually persuaded in advance of the rightness, at least in principle, of what is advocated, while those who do not agree never put themselves in a position to listen if they can help it.

Since the people who hear expect the Church's proclamation to take the form of exhortations in line with what they already accept, at least in principle, any live interest on their part tends to take the form of concern with even more secondary matters. The literary style of the preacher becomes for many the major consideration in deciding not only whether to attend Church services, but also whether or not to participate in the activities of the Christian community. There is always interest in what is felt to be "daring" preaching—not in the form of overt challenges to the presuppositions of the congregation itself, but rather the contrary, a courageous attack upon straw men which neither speaker nor hearers take seriously. Indeed, nothing is quite as fascinating as a verbal attack upon Christian traditions, named by word, which nobody has explored and nobody understands. Therefore, all concerned feel very modern and liberal. Again, interest may take the form of curiosity over factual matters about the historic origin of present customs which people are using anyhow.

Those who hear the Church's proclamation do not as a rule question the basic presuppositions of their culture. To the extent, therefore, that they catch the note of criticism, they tend to hear it in terms of applications rather than presuppositions. This is true whether the hearers identify themselves with the "orthodox" tradition in modern culture—Capitalism in its reli-

gious manifestations—or with the "heterodox" strain—Communism. Although Christianity is primarily a radical criticism of the self-authenticating pretensions of all cultures, those who hear it without questioning their own presuppositions do not appreciate that fact. If they hear the note of criticism with approval, they take it to be an indictment of that strain with which they disagree—Capitalist or Communist as the case may be. If they hear it criticising what they approve of, they tend to regard the preacher as identifying Christianity with the opposing cultural group—again Capitalism or Communism.

The task of communicating the Christian proclamation faces at the outset a major obstacle. Since people expect to hear certain things and tend to find what they expect, regardless of what is actually said, and since those who hear usually agree in principle beforehand and are, therefore, on the lookout for secondary values, there is a serious gulf to be crossed. Likewise, it must be recognized that most people do not question the presuppositions of their culture. If anything is to happen at all, communication must take place in terms of the primary issue. The task of preaching the Christian message involves making that kind of contact with people which confronts them with this clearly and directly. Then even a rejection constitutes a serious choice and an acceptance means conversion.

If the proclamation of the Christian Gospel is to result in this kind of confrontation, it cannot be primarily on an intellectual level. Rather, it must involve the illumination in depth of the situations in which people are actually involved so that the dimension of significance is brought to the fore. Then, and then only, can men and women discover that they define the meaning of their own lives through the decisions they make in those areas where they already admit concern, and also through their practical actions, which determine whether or not other areas are still entitled to serious attention.

If the Christian proclamation is heard, means that the hearer understands his ow concrete relationships and responsibiliti in the light of the Cross, meaning that is here that he knows the reality of his ow sinfulness, the graciousness of divine fo giveness, and the freedom of walking the fellowship of the sons of God. The familiar phrases are depth descriptions the hearer's own involvement in fami affairs, in the demands and contradictio of the economic order, and in the broad implications of political responsibility.

The difference between this kind of communication and that which the wor expects to receive involves something mo profound than techniques, even thoug there is a place for techniques in the pro ess of dealing with it. The difficulty sym tomizes dramatically and powerfully th problem to which the Christian Gospel addressed. If the issue were simply one informing people about things or inspirin them to do things, the task of communica ing the Christian message would be of e tending and improving relationships an tendencies which already exist. But th movement of the Christian Gospel tak place in an entirely different area.

The Christian Gospel is concerned wit making men so completely aware of the predicament that they want to have the lives put on an entirely different basi The Christian message begins with such dynamic description of the alternative po sibilities of self-deception and despair i every human decision and action that me will be willing to accept a radically diffe ent kind of confidence from that on whic the world ordinarily acts. The Christia proclamation is chiefly concerned with th problem of life's meaning as encountered i actual living, and, therefore, its proclam tion undercuts all premature meaningfu ness.

As long as men are seeking answers fo their problems in terms of externals— whether in the areas of philosophy, ethi or pragmatic action—they and the Chri tian Gospel are talking about entirely di

rent things. But the misunderstanding s its roots not so much in man's being isinformed about the function of religion it does in the universal human tendency avoid really facing the problem of mean- g at all. When men think their problems e solvable on an external basis, they are t compelled to look for the roots in man nature itself, particularly as re- aled in their own individual and group tions.

The perennial human tendency is to pect situational solutions for the human oblem—through some form of the Chris- n ethic, or through an ecclesiastical pat- n, or the Capitalist system, or Commu- sm, or psychoanalysis, or some combina- n of these or other possible rearrange- nts of affairs. A good many spokesmen the Christian Church likewise think y are providing situational solutions. As g as problems can be externalized in this nner, men are not forced to face starkly ultimate question of whether life has y meaning in the light of their practical volvement in the detailed circumstances family, business, neighborhood, and rld affairs.

The Gospel begins with a denial that uational solutions of problems can in a ndamental way make life meaningful. an's hope is not to be placed in any ternal rearrangement of things, even ough rearrangement may be necessary. e problem of communication becomes y sharp at this point, because men ex- t situational solutions, and are inclined a variety of reasons to fail to see any er approach. When some suggestion of New Testament proclamation in this se gets through, it will be rejected as en as not on the grounds that it cuts nerve of effort. It is also rejected on the unds that it is needlessly abstract.

The confusion of abstraction with con- teness is a perennial symptom of the man problem. Plato's figure of "The ve" recognized the fact long before the e of Christ, even though Plato's under- nding of its significance was incomplete. As long as men can use abstractions as if they were concrete, they can largely avoid facing the problem of the meaning of their own lives at all, but they do not eliminate the problem to which the Gospel is addressed. They anaesthetize themselves against feeling it. Hence, any question of this scheme of things becomes a fundamental threat, which cannot be accepted as relevant at all or must be vigorously denounced.

During the two thousand years of Christian history, the key symbols of the religion have been abstracted, so that they serve at one and the same time to protect people from having to inquire as to whether their lives have any meaning, and also to point to situational solutions to the problems people cannot avoid encountering. The word "God" suggests to people that they live in an essentially orderly, peaceful universe, and the whole thing would be perfect if men tried a little harder to rectify certain maladjustments. The word "Christ" has come to suggest that somehow or other the suggestion involved in the word God has been demonstrated historically and therefore can be counted on.

When the Gospel, in its New Testament sense, is preached, the problem has to be faced that its key symbols have become fixtures in an entirely different kind of world than that which the New Testament presupposes. On the basis of the natural tendency of human nature to avoid the issue of meaningfulness, reinforced by using abstract symbols as if they were concrete, men have erected a structure of questions and answers having little if anything to do with their real problems. But as long as they remain within this structure, they are guarded from the full sharpness of the two alternatives of despair and self-deception latent in their everyday actions and decisions.

The problem of communication cannot be met by using the great traditional symbols of the Christian faith as if they were automatically useful. Their normal usage confuses the issue of communication itself

by involving the discussants in a futile mixup of abstractions and concretions, in which no participant can ever be sure whether the people with whom he is talking are raising real questions, symbolic questions or evasive questions; or whether his interpretations of life are heard as reality, symbol or evasion. Every minister who has ever reflected on the difference between what he says and what men hear when he reads the Burial Office knows this issue all too poignantly, since he realizes that the problem is not simply one of definitions but rather that people live in different worlds.

The task of communicating the Christian message requires that people be introduced to a new and different world of meaning from that which they generally take for granted. Not only are the traditional Christian symbols more or less useless for this primary encounter, because of the confusion concerning them, but the term "religion" itself is not usually a very helpful word to use. People tend to think of religion in an external and objective sense—as if it referred to a series of propositions about the structure of an objective universe, or to a code of ethics by which men solve their problem of living, or to an intellectual syllogism by which men step out of history into the world of ideas.

As the Christian faith sees the category religion, it refers to the frame of reference in which people place their daily experience, their immediate tensions and conflicts, their normal responsibilities, and the external pressures which they recognize as impinging upon their lives. Therefore, it comes as a rather serious shock to some people to discover that religion is not an esoteric, mystical way of living above life, but the way, rather, that they actually interpret their experience so as to be able to choose and act in a world where life goes on.

By beginning with an analysis of the significance of the kind of daily experience all men know, and the pressures which every family and group encounter, the issue of abstraction does not arise. Neither is it obvious that a functionally different concept of religion is being presented. But a functional basis of communication can be established without necessary confusion arising from the use of verbalisms and abstractions.

The process of communicating the Christian Gospel involves three steps, considered not chronologically but existentially. The third step presupposes the other two, and indeed, to concentrate on the third step—the answer—without the other two being in mind is the functional negation of all religion. The first step consists of clarifying the problem by undercutting all premature answers. The second step deals with the heightened sense of personal and group responsibility in concrete situations, even though complete solutions are not available. The third step is the Christian understanding of forgiveness and grace for people who take the other two steps seriously.

The first step in communicating the Christian message is to lead men and women to reappraise the significance of tensions and pressures they encounter in daily living, so as to make them abandon premature and imaginary solutions for their problems. This has always been the first step in preaching the Gospel since the days of the Apostles. The one recorded instance when Paul neglected to do this—the sermon on Mars Hill at Athens—shows that the same kind of confusion could exist in the first century as exists today in the twentieth whenever men think they are being asked primarily to approve or disapprove an external proposition.

It is right at this point that "ethical" preaching defeats its own purpose. By urging people to try harder or to aim higher, or to take on more responsibility, the preacher is reinforcing the presuppositions of the listeners rather than questioning their world of meaning. He may disturb some individuals and groups by suggesting detailed ethical demands they do not wish to accept, but the listener always has the option of considering it

bjectively as to whether or not he agrees. e may even justify himself to some extent y acknowledging the standard even though does not actually fulfill it.

The first step is concerned primarily with aking sense out of life for people whose al problems arise in the course of meeting nsions at home, in business and in the orld. It is in these relationships that en actually are forced to question their sic confidence. It is here that they meet reats which seem to deny life's meaning. is here that questions arise as to whether makes any difference what they do. verybody is aware of this, and communica- on is possible on this level. It will re- ain open as long as premature diagnosis d solutions are not advanced.

The first step in communicating the spel, therefore, is concerned solely with ncrete experience—discussing it, question- g cause and effect, inquiring into vision d reality, appraising the whys and where- es of satisfactions and frustrations—all th the end of leading the listener to dis- ver for himself that he can find no endur- g basis of confidence for himself on the uational level. Yet he must have some nd of confidence because life goes on, oblems arise, situations force themselves on him, decisions have to be made.

The problem is one of leading men to andon their ordinary expectancies be- use they are meaningless or impossible, d at the same time leading them to an en sharper awareness of life's inexorable mand. Men must discover for themselves at they are caught between self-deception d despair in the course of meeting daily oblems, where they must go on living in world where all human achievements e at best tentative. Then they begin ask significant questions, and then the ristian Gospel, in its positive aspect, ints to an answer related to a real need.

The second step may be likened to the le of John the Baptist—preaching repent- ce for the remission of sin, though with- t using the familiar Biblical passage until its relevance is clear. This step consists of enabling men and women to discover for themselves that although they are caught between the twin alternatives of self-deception and despair, there is no relaxation of responsibility. On the contrary, the sense of demand is heightened. The purpose of this second step is to enable men to apply to themselves with concrete relevance to their actual relationships at home, in business, in the community and in the larger world, Paul's words: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" or Isaiah's "Woe is me for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips who dwells in a people of unclean lips."

Until men recognize the heightened demand involved in honestly facing the question of the meaning of their practical relationships, they never get beyond the universal stage of anxiety. Arthur Koestler's novels, *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure,* show how sensitive men facing the realities of their political, economic, and social involvements are forced to discover that not only can they not find a situational salvation, but also that responsibility continues. Even though the demands men meet are never clear and simple, but always ambiguous and contradictory, they must choose and act anyway. The description of the last judgment in *Arrival and Departure* is an excellent analysis of the problem.

There can be no repentance without a sense of sin. It is not sufficient to be aware of the ambiguities and contradictions in life's demands as they are encountered. Men are responsible and must act responsibly. It is here that Koestler reaches his highest awareness. The Bible underlines the point even more sharply. Not only is the prophet Isaiah forced by facing the facts to abandon placing his confidence in the continuing institutions of Judah, kingdom and temple, but he must accept a share of responsibility for the complacency and corruption of the society of which he is a part, and yet he must go back to it and work in it.

But there is always a danger of a premature solution just at this point. The contemporary vogue of Continental theology has led some preachers into what amounts to presenting salvation through vocabulary —making correct words a substitution for the Kingdom of God. A *pro forma* sense of man's unworthiness, however, has no more saving power than an externalized Church or a literalized Bible. The sense of sin to which the Gospel refers concerns the actual relationships of everyday life, where men are continually led to deny the tentative, incomplete, and partially false nature of their actual achievements in the world of family, business, and social affairs, and to live as if they had an essential integrity uncompromised by historical involvements.

The word "Sin" as used in the Bible describes man's continual attempts to deny the reality of his own situation—either to take refuge in despair on the one hand, or self-deception on the other, as if one or the other were a virtue, and so evade the cutting edge of responsible acceptance of demand. The preaching of repentance for the remission of sin, therefore, must point continually to the practical situations calling for decision and action, which never let up completely, and which continually strike the note of responsible relationship to the real world. It is in these practical relationships of home, business, neighborhood, and larger world affairs that people attempt to deny the reality of their situation.

The significance of sin must be functional, not verbal. Instead of judging himself and his world on the basis of departures in detail from some particular moral code, man has to discover that he himself and every human group and institution is always seeking to establish its own basis of confidence where its sense of meaning is invulnerable. The preaching of repentance then is to lead men to see in their normal behavior, as individuals and as members of groups, what Auden recognized in "The Christian Oratorio":

> "Since Adam, being free to choose,
> Chose to imagine he was free
> To choose his own necessity,
> Lost in his freedom man pursues
> The shadow of his images."

This second step, which was used not only by John the Baptist but by Jesus Himself in His own teaching ministry, is the most neglected part of the communication of the Christian message by the churches today. Yet without this second step, the Christian proclamation is not really the answer to the ultimate question all men must face, but rather something else. It is made into either an elective among possible moral codes, or an institutional method of being geared into the universal process, or a kind of intellectual-emotional sugar frosting to be smeared over the top of the great accomplishments of the human race.

The seriousness with which this second step is taken is the acid test of whether there is any real communication in the Christian sense at all. Kierkegaard was fond of distinguishing between Christendom, by which he meant a formally Christian culture, and Christianity, the dynamic acceptance of the Christian faith. When the second step is ignored, the best the churches can do is to smooth out and polish up Christendom. The Christian message, as such, demands a radical discontinuity with all culture, because all cultures are essentially ambiguous—they are the focussing of human achievements and the institutionalizing of human pretension. As long as men do not consciously stand over against the culture of which they are a part, in that kind of judgment which recognizes that the judger himself is an embodiment of the culture, they cannot appreciate what the Bible means by sin.

The prophets of the Old Testament preached doom to the pretensions of individual and group achievements, making that doom particularly sharp at that very point where they supposed man to have reached his highest spiritual sensitivity—

the House of Israel. One is often forced wonder whether a dynamic rephrasing of e prophetic proclamation of doom is not the preaching that can be done in our e, since men do not seem to be sufficiently ture in their grasp of their own predica- nt to be able to appreciate the redemp- n which is in Christ Jesus. Be that as may, a major element of preaching the ngdom of God in our day must be the erthrowal of all other kingdoms—all ner bases of confidence, all other ex- ctancies. It is at this point that the rld-view of the Christian Gospel, as re- ed to the practical areas of home, busi- ss, neighborhood, and nations, is in such arp contrast with the expectancies of both Capitalist culture and the Communist volt against that culture.

A dynamic sense of sin, in which men st recognize the ambiguity of self-decep- n and despair involved in every individ- l and group choice and action, then cept unflinchingly their own involvement the problem, and finally are aware, not a slackened sense of demand because of futility of making final solutions, but ther of a heightened sense of demand the form of greater responsibility in the actical areas of an ongoing life—this is prerequisite for the positive note of the ristian Gospel. It is here that men be- me aware functionally of the claim of the ngdom on themselves.

The ultimate note in the proclamation the Christian Gospel is redemption in rist Jesus—or the kind of answer Chris- n faith gives to the questions men are king really. They are prepared to appre- te this only if they first of all see the nctional nature of all religion, and then ve some profound realization of them- ves as under judgment. Without the st precondition, the Christian note of demption is irrelevant to the problems n are really facing, in that it does not eak to their confusion as they are actually periencing it. Without the second pre- ndition the Christian note of redemption an escape from history which cannot help become both unreal and unconvincing in the long run.

Redemption, as understood in the Christian faith, is both a fact and a promise. It is a fact in that forgiveness is known here and now, and that human relationships are seen through different eyes here and now. It is a promise in that we do not live in a world in which all tensions are or can be relaxed, all decisions easy to make, and all problems either solved or soluble. The Christian lives in the same old world of contradiction and threat, only now it is appreciated more accurately.

A good deal of preaching goes off the track right at this point in announcing a triumph within history which denies the reality of history, and thus distorts the human situation into something other than it is. The result of such a distortion is one of three things—rejection by those who take history seriously from the start, disillusionment of those who discover the continuing pressure of historical tensions, or a new self-deception using a literalized or mystically-interpreted Christian myth to insulate people against history and thus making a place for new irresponsibilities.

The Christian faith does, however, proclaim a redemption here and now. It states that forgiveness can be known meaningfully and significantly by men and women who admit the sinfulness of their own practical relationships in daily life, not simply as a matter of specific omissions and commissions, but rather as the projection of their own egotism into every situation involving decision and action. The Christian assertion is not that this problem is now erased for good and all, but that people who see themselves this way are reassured of the continuing usefulness—indeed, the enhanced usefulness—of their lives. It is not that their sinfulness does not matter, but that they have an assured place in God's scheme of things through God's mercy. Life does not come to an end. Responsibilities are not annulled. Everything continues, but its orientation is transformed.

The Christian symbols for this awareness are the Cross and Resurrection, without which the depth and reality of forgiveness can never be appreciated. In preaching the Gospel affirmatively, this is what is announced—the good news that men may here and now die unto their own individual and group egotism through faith. In a world where problems continue and the tendency to define life by placing oneself at the center of problems never is fully disposed of, the Cross and Resurrection stand for a new birth in a world of transformed meaning, not where life is made easy, but where men's relationship to their problems is on a creative basis.

The Christian faith announces a redemption which transforms the nature of human relationships—the frame of reference in which the problems of man against man and group against group are seen and understood. The symbol for this is the Church—the fellowship of faith in the Cross and Resurrection, by which men through dying to their own individual and group egotism, are reborn in a new relationship to each other "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, where there is neither bond nor free, where there is neither male nor female."

Neither the note of forgiveness nor the note of brotherhood in Christ Jesus are realizations which can be made once and for all and then taken for granted. They are both present facts, but under the heading of faith rather than of history. They are promises of an ultimate fulfillment beyond history. In a world where the actualities of home life, the contradictions of business procedure, the exigencies of political action and the pressures of world forces make all decisions ambiguous on the level of history, men are enabled to act according to the truth as they see it, trusting God's forgiveness to over-rule their pretensions, and the brotherhood of faith to overcome their rivalries and contentions.

In communicating the Gospel, it is here that the contact is either made and becomes creative, or is missed and the whole proclamation fails to have significant results. The redemption we proclaim is known here and now in the way we see ourselves, not as isolated from our relationships and historical involvements, but as we happen to be related and involved. We live as Christians by faith and forgiveness in a world where brotherhood is a present fact only if it is also an ultimate promise over-ruling all present facts. Conflict is not annulled, since history continues, and the redemption we know must have its bearing upon the history in which we are involved. But conflict is transformed, not into a simple unity, not into something which really does not matter, but into the concrete occasion for making the present fact known by vital faith.

It is in this way that the communication of the Christian message becomes truly relevant. It is not an escape from history into a resolution of human problems on a sphere above mundane matters, nor is it a naïve confidence that some particular oversimplified solution may be superimposed on history. It is rather the illumination in depth of all concrete relationships—of family, business, neighborhood and world—so that the dimensions of responsibility and denial stand out for what they are, and in which living men and women are freed to be themselves in a real world. Thus they are able to face the twin dangers of self-deception and despair by a new confidence as reborn people who know themselves as forgiven sinners. This is good news.

THE WEAKNESS AND THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

By GEORGE E. BEILBY, JR.

I

The church's strength does not derive from its institutional guarantees of uniqueness. In fact it is a sure sign of weakness within the church when it has to buttress Christ with such historical accretions as apostolic succession, papal infallibility, and the closed communion. When the church must resort to expeditious measures to maintain its authority, its fate is not dissimilar to the fate of all purely historical enterprises. The church ought to know that its strength will never be found by making Christ its servant, no matter how self-effacing its professed intentions may be. "Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be."

The church has always been tempted to misread the nature of its power. The crusades to the Holy Land in the middle ages are an illustration of the church's misapprehension of the source and nature of its power. And we have within the church today what appear to be unjustified claims to power and strength. To be sure the contemporary church is not so foolish as to commit the same form of sin as the crusades, yet in some of its members there is a worldly, militant spirit which would justify the use of the church's power as a death-dealing weapon against its foes. Whenever the church is tempted to align itself unqualifiedly with any purely historical agents of redemption, it is guilty of giving unwarranted sanction to a forcing process in history which prematurely would claim the full-grown state. It is guilty at the same time of not giving sufficient consideration to the fact in its own history that the Way, the Truth, and the Life whom it calls Lord was destroyed by the very same human machinations which destroy men and nations today. The strength of the church is not to be found in the moral approbation of historical causes, nor by riding the coat tails of historical conflicts. It ought to remember that its God is both revealed and hidden. Any divine sanction it may give to the justice and righteousness of our cause must take into consideration the infinite mercy and love of God whose kingdom awaits for all those who repent and turn to Him. It seems that this point cannot be made too strongly within the church.

It is a weakness of the church when it considers itself primarily an institution which knows a system of belief and has objectified this belief into an all-encompassing idol of devotion. Religion, then, becomes form and structure with little content. Or worse, its form and structure become hand-molded. Why has American Protestantism, for example, managed quite well in the past century or more to segregate itself into class churches? Cannot one reason be that the church has allowed herself to become an object of devotion? She has lost her unique quality by allowing herself to be the object of man's vanity and his self-adulation. One has the impression in Protestant circles, at least, that the church is little more than glorified middle-class man.

It is curious and tragic how the church has been caught in a worship of itself. One sees this idolatry at all levels in the church. The layman would make *his* church the most popular in town. To this end he will make great effort, but invite him to consider, for instance, how Christianity, *his* religion, is related to the democratic form of government under which he lives and he'll be very busily engaged elsewhere. The lay-woman knows a loyalty to her church, but suggest to her that this same loyalty ought to make itself

felt along ecumenical lines and she will bristle. The parson knows better, or should know better, the law of Christ, but try to have an interdenominational communion service for a group of college students and some one or two of the elect will arise to throw an historical road block in the way. And the sermons we preach! Whom are we trying to marry? Christ to the world? The congregation to ourselves? Or the world to Christ?

The contemporary happiness cult in Protestantism is an interesting illustration of the heresy which evolves when the church objectifies its gospel. In this cult the principal concern seems to be the gaining of a happy, well-adjusted life. The focus of attention is the self, and the adjustment one is supposed to make is always an adjustment to the culture in which he lives. Such sermon subjects as, "How to get where you want to go," or "How to release the atomic energy within you," suggest that the gospel of Christ is a success formula for climbing the ladder to personal gain and social approval. It is true that the Reformation re-established valid Christian principles, but in doing so, it opened the door to a personal freedom which contemporary man has not been able to handle. He has become lost in his freedom, which is probably one reason why the palliative forms of Christianity meet with such popular acceptance.

This freedom which the individual and the corporate body of the church knows has been a source of embarrassment to the church. It cannot make a corporate witness to Christ because the nature of the witness is never clear in its own mind. It cannot yet make up its mind about the meaning of God's revelation in Christ. Some would understand it as a sign that man is destined to accomplish great things in this world like Jesus, while others would interpret it as a sign that man is to be frustrated in the attainment of his goals. The more profound truth about Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospels and the truth of Paul, the truth of the early church and the truth of its creeds, has been lost by much of contemporary Protestantism because in its freedom it has been able to entertain many alternative forms of redemption, yet, at the same time, has not had sufficient insight into its own unique form to redress error and stave off the incursions into its faith by secular alternatives. A case in point is the Christian woman, who, after many years as a practising Christian, has discarded her faith for the current fad of Dianetics. Or take the secular idea of progress, that Don Juan of our culture, which has been wooing the church for a long time. So enamored has the church become with the idea of the possibility of the Kingdom of God within history that it has been willing to give voice to only part of its gospel (which says the man is created in the image of God) and has been willing at the same time to mislay another part (which says that man has fallen and is in need of redemption). Truly, the freedom which the Protestant wing of the church has discovered has allowed it to play loose with Christ. We Protestants bear Him gifts on Christmas and Easter, like the man who faithfully remembers his alimony checks. We recognize a responsibility (after all, there *are* the children) but our love is elsewhere, anywhere we can find it without having to know its judgment upon each one of us.

II

If the many weaknesses of the church are caused by an objectification of its Lord, then it would appear that the church's strength lies in the re-discovery of Jesus Christ as the reigning Lord of the church. He, who is Lord of history, is also Lord of the church. To be sure, this knowledge is already at work in the higher councils of the church. Ecumenical gatherings affirm it with a real sense of its meaning. Confessedly, the World Council of Churches was drawn together by its Lord. It will continue to stay together, so long as he reigns in its assemblies and in its deliberations. It knows a strength which is

not its own. But down in the local churches is where this gospel truth needs to be lived and affirmed. Three principles are inherent in the gospel and are the bases of motivation for all worship and work in the churches.

The first is the principle of encounter. Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament one is very conscious that the persons who speak to us with the deepest insights are those who have actively engaged in an encounter with God. This does not mean that once the individual or the church has engaged in an encounter with God, he is then set free from the Lord to work out his own salvation. For it seems that the nature of the encounter is such that continual re-engagements are mandatory. Thus it might seem that denominational Protestantism would gain fresh insights into its nature by seeking active engagement with the Lord, rather than relying so heavily upon its various historical traditions as the hall mark of its continuing witness. In the light of its existence now, it needs to seek Him. It should remember that throughout the history of the church personal encounters with God have brought new strength into the church, and that only as the church as an institution understands that its witness to Christ depends upon active re-engagements with Him can it speak an effective and saving word to its people. Thus it would seem that all historical accretions in the church need to be subjected continually to the judgment of God. Denominational traditions can act as spiritual strait jackets. What was right for nineteenth and eighteenth century Protestantism may not be right now. Only by continual active engagement with God can the church and its people find the strength of His truth. Furthermore, it is only through continual encounter with God that the church of today can itself make any positive contributions to the rich tradition within the church. The church's function is not primarily one of preserving tradition, but rather one of proclaiming the Gospel. All of its presuppositions about itself ought to be continually examined, lest they clog the channel through which His grace may flow. If the principle of encounter is true, then the church should know a Godly humor about itself. It should be able to laugh at itself and its presumptions, lest, in its seriousness about its own claims, it become rigid and inflexible and miss the seriousness with which God judges and redeems even the church. The strength of the church lies in continual active engagement with God.

The second principle of motivation within the church is the principle of commitment. There is only one sovereign commitment in all of Christendom. It is the individual's and the church's commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The nature of Christ is such that the commitment which he evokes allows for the greatest amount of individual and denominational freedom. Yet, at the same time, the nature of Christ is such that commitment to him demands the total self. It is only through total commitment that the church and its people may know the riches of the gospel. A perspective with which to view history, both corporate and personal, is given. The concept of the Kingdom of God, which secularists know as Utopia, becomes actualized in experience, and, at the same time, is the promise of fulfillment which lies at history's end. In this regard, the problem of time whose meaning has been sought for both in nature and in the course of history becomes clarified. Time is known to have a beginning and an end because its monotonous run has been bisected by Christ. The past receives light and the future takes on new meaning. The principle of commitment to Christ allows the church to view itself in a new dimension. It is no longer dependent upon historical processes within or without its borders for the fulfillment of its destiny. Its destiny has already been fulfilled by the life and death and resurrection of its Lord. The church knows the meaning of existential time in the moment of encounter with Christ and commitment to him. It is in this new time relationship

that the church finds its strength and discovers its meaning. For then its concern is not the destiny of itself, but rather the destiny of the children of this world. In commitment the church may know a strength from God with which to proclaim its gospel and confront the people with this new dimension of life.

The third principle by which the church is motivated, because of its encounter and commitment, is the principle of communication. It is one thing to know the gospel through encounter and commitment, but yet another to communicate it to a society which not only does not know the vocabulary of encounter and commitment but also thinks in entirely different categories than those of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. For instance, a predominant concept in the minds of the members of society is the idea of happiness. This is a goal, something to be attained. It doesn't seem that anything short of conversion would be strong enough to unseat this concept, yet the church is continually constrained to deal with this problem at the preaching and counselling levels of its ministry. But it is precisely in this attempt to deal with the problem that the church finds its strength. In the market place of ideas, the church is forced to present its gospel with as much cogency and persuasion as other ideas are presented. In fact, it must do even more. It must be able to see the fallacies of alternative possibilities and, at the same time, maintain its own truth in all fairness and love. This is a difficult feat for the church to perform. It not only requires intellectual integrity but also emotional stability. In the market place, the church is forced to expose its dogmas to the severest testing. Knowing this, it continually must lay bare its own presuppositions and be prepared unashamedly and with wisdom, to have them challenged and pawed over by the buying public. Yet in the open market, where communication is difficult, the church learns to seek new thought categories for expression of its truth. It learns that it cannot plead its gospel by the use of dogmatic formulas. It learns that its truth becomes actualized and accepted when it speaks a more profound and saving word to the hearer than other forms. In the publishing abroad of its gospel the church may find a strength which is based upon nothing less than Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No greater strength than this can be known.

THE LOGIC OF ANTI-SECULARISM

By JOHN I. DANIEL

Today's number one sermon vogue is to hold up the "demon" of Secularism as a whipping boy before a fashionable congregation, and soundly to flail it for 22 minutes. Usually there are no conscious "secularists" present to be offended.

But climbing down from the logic of the pulpit into the work-a-day world of public schools and labor unions, newspapers and radio programs, of Owen Lattimore versus Senator McCarthy, we gain a different perspective on the struggle. We are not so certain as to who is St. George and who the Dragon.

For example, at the last Congregational General Council (Cleveland, June 1950), the following statement was sponsored by the Council for Social Action: "Millions of Americans, Roman Catholics and Protestants, love the Lord Jesus Christ and seek honestly to find His way. Together we can strengthen democracy and make a staunch and victorious stand against the forces of secularism." *

The statement stimulated from the floor a host of challenging questions.

> • Does the Catholic Church *really* believe in Democracy? • Is it seeking to use fair-minded Protestants as its fellow travellers for basically institutional objectives? • Are we not being naïve catspaws? • After secularists are liquidated, who will come next? • What about the experience of Protestant chaplains whose sincere efforts at cooperation with their Catholic colleagues have been smashed upon the rocks of reality? • Is the Vatican in any way penitent for the pacts it made with both Hitler and Mussolini? • Is a partnership with Protestants an equal one in Catholic eyes?

* *Social Action Bulletin*, 15 June 1950, p. 42.

And so it went. Boiled down, the opposition to the proposed "Anti-Secular Front" comprised this terse question: "Is it right for us to fellow travel with Cardinal Spellman and Fulton Sheen, for example, against the spirit of Jefferson, Franklin, Paine, and Lincoln?"

There were those who considered this a loaded question, overlooking such prophetic Catholics as Philip Murray and Father George B. Ford of Corpus Christi Parish in New York City. The Catholic Workers' Group, with its shrines to Negro saints, was cited, together with the spirit of Cardinal Newman, G. K. Chesterton, and Sir Thomas More. But the stubborn question persisted: what is the practical contemporary relevance of such liberality when the Vatican today can successfully *blackmail* 90 per cent of American newspapers, or crack the whip calling for solidarity of the faithful against every vestige of sex education in the American public schools?

When sincere Protestants advocate collaboration with Romanists to the end of "advancing democracy," they must face the question whether the Catholic Church is really concerned with the defense and extension of democracy *per se*. Is it not rather interested in that form of government, whether it be fascist or feudal, which will give it an inside track? Moreover, even when it is tactically allied with democracy, is this not in the merely political sense, rather than in the spiritual sense?

A college girl, who overcame the temptation to contract a Catholic marriage, stated her central reason with remarkable cogency. "Democracy, despite many imperfections," she declared, "is too sacred a heritage to be trifled with in the name of religious piety."

If and when the issue arises between theological logic and the wider spiritual im-

plications of democracy, what biblical precedent has the aspiring disciple of Jesus as the basis for making his choice? The dilemma is tersely illustrated in our Lord's parable of the son who promised his father he would do a piece of work, but didn't, versus his brother who overtly refused to make the promise, but later conformed to his father's desire. (Matt., 21:28–32.)

Gandhi did not profess Christ formally, but he was more Christ-like than most believers. A similar observation can be made regarding a great many Jews. Moreover, our Lord recruited his initial following largely from persons without formal religious profession. "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold," He said (John, 10:16). Jesus was imaginative enough to look outside the household of faith, to work with many non-pious persons, to the horror of the pharisees. Have we any reason to suppose that He would ally Himself with non-democratic religionists against non-religious democrats in the world of today? Certainly He would not do so uncritically.

Thus, whether or not we agree with the Council for Social Action statement on Catholic-Protestant Relations, as read at Cleveland, we can be sympathetic with the sincerity of the opposition to it. In a sense it presents the danger of "sicking" us upon thousands of men of good will, for the reason that they do not give orthodox profession to Christ.

Materialism is an unqualified enemy which we are constrained to oppose, inside and outside our hearts. But *secularism* is morally more ambiguous. To commit ourselves to a crusade against what the Roman Church and its fellow travellers call 'secularism" is to assist certain of our enemies in the liquidation of many of our friends. It is, indeed, to discredit the chief authors of our constitutional Bill of Rights.

The logic of anti-secularism must be modified before it can be assured of the wide base of loyalty from socially-minded churchmen it seems to expect today.

BOOK REVIEWS

MODERN ARMS AND FREE MEN. *By Vannevar Bush.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949. $3.50. Paper bound, $1.00.

Vannevar Bush, head of the war time Office of Scientific Research and Development, writes this "discussion of the role of science in preserving democracy." The book is interesting, informative, hopeful; and it offers a good many ideas worth thinking about.

Combining a scientist's knowledge of the discoveries and techniques which have affected modern warfare and a citizen's concern for the wider sweep of human problems, Bush centers his book around two conclusions: "I believe, first, that the technological future is far less dreadful and frightening than many of us have been led to believe, and that the hopeful aspects of modern applied science outweigh by a heavy margin its threat to our civilization. I believe, second, that the democratic process is itself an asset with which, if we can find the enthusiasm and the skill to use it and the faith to make it strong, we can build a world in which all men can live in prosperity and peace."

The evidence for the first statement is hard for the non-expert to assess. Bush's picture of a future war is grim enough but avoids some current predictions: cities may be wiped out, but hardly whole national populations. Social life may be expected to survive, though paying a heavy price. In two specific ways Bush expects the balance of power to swing toward the defense: In land warfare the development of anti-tank weapons (mines and rockets) cuts down the chance of blitzkrieg against a prepared and alert defense; in air warfare the development of radar, jet fighters, rockets and proximity fuses gives defensive fighter planes an advantage over heavy bombers and will make mass bombardment a thing of the past, provided again the defense is prepared and alert. (The book was published before the open discussion of the H-bomb; but presumably Bush was aware of the possibilities and would not now change his judgment.) Countering these two developments is a swing in favor of the offense in the development of submarine warfare.

These specific conclusions have been challenged by some experts, and the rest of us can simply follow the debates from afar. The rest of Bush's first conclusion—that "the hopeful aspects of modern applied science outweigh by a heavy margin its threat to our civilization"—is not based on technological evidence but on Bush's faith in democracy and mankind.

This faith is the substance of Bush's second conclusion. Chapter 13 contains some fine statements on the relationship of science to faith. Science, as Bush sees it, neither confirms nor denies the substance of man's faiths. "These things are beyond its ken." "A poem can touch truths that go beyond those that are examinable by test tube or the indications of needles on instruments. . . . Every scientist who gets out of a specialized cubicle is soon led to the boundaries where the inability of the mind of man ever to measure, analyze, or grasp is fully evident."

Bush's own articles of faith are more open to question. The fundamental conflict in the world he finds between materialism and faith in "the dignity of man." And, of course, this conflict comes close to paralleling today's major international political conflict. Bush is quite willing to acknowledge that many individuals behind the iron curtain are not particularly guilty, though their political leadership follows the "materialistic" pattern. He is less able to see that a great many people on this side of the curtain have little faith in the dignity of man and in their actions offer little evidence to support such a faith. He quite ignores what the Christian must emphasize—that

the fundamental conflict is not between different societies but within the souls of men and societies. Hence Bush is too little aware of the evils gnawing at the heart of democracy.

This overconfidence in democracy reflects itself on various levels. On the military and scientific level, Bush is quite sure that democracy, though lacking some of the centralized efficiency of totalitarianism, has a freedom of investigation and discussion which make it far more progressive than those who threaten it. We may hope that the judgment is right. But to this old soldier Hanson Baldwin's criticism seems convincing—that Bush underestimates the technological efficiency of certain dictatorships and overlooks the degree to which superior quantity rather than quality finally overwhelmed the German armies. (It may also be noted that the Russian dictatorship produced the atom bomb somewhat more quickly than Bush seems to have expected.)

The overconfidence in democracy is still more dangerous on the political level. For Bush assumes far too easily that American Democracy is all right if, with vigilance for liberty, it keeps on in the good old way. Persuasively he shows that the military strength of a nation for total war depends not merely on armaments but on its total national strength—including freedom from severe depressions and unemployment, and the health of its citizenry. But—with scarcely a glance at the weaknesses of our past record in these regards—he assumes that the primary dangers to our democracy are in the direction of the welfare state or something like British socialism. He completely ignores the evils of racialism in this country, as they have embarrassed our diplomacy and our reputation around the world.

In days when too many think of the world struggle only in terms of crass military power, it is well worth while to read a study which relates military strength to the total strength of democracy. But democracy will need more searching criticism and more thorough reform than Bush envisions if it is to justify his faith or meet the tests ahead. And—to go beyond the subject of Bush's book—a faith adequate for the history of our time will need to be more than a faith in democracy; it will need to call men to repentance and to show them, not how to stand off their enemies, but how to find in the midst of the tragedies of past and future years a vision of redemption.

ROGER L. SHINN

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE ATOMIC CRISIS. *By Edward LeRoy Long, Jr.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press. $2.00.

Mr. Long has the advantage of most of us in that he is both scientist and theologian. He is scientific enough to interpret what the scientists are saying: he is a theologian enough to know that they can't say it all. His book in consequence has a real frontier quality, moving roughly between the Nicene Creed and the "Baruch Report."

He is emphatic that what he is discussing is a Christian *response* and not a Christian *answer;* since what the Christian faith provides is a basis for living responsively and responsibly in situations in which there are no clear-cut "answers."

"The atomic crisis is not primarily a historical problem, which can be solved by political answers, however important the place of these may be. The atomic crisis is a historical illumination of life's deepest issues; it forces each individual to re-examine has basic interpretation of reality that he may be furnished with resources to meet these issues." (p. 110)

The book is full of important material in compact form: the judgment of the scientists, the salient difference on atomic control between Russia and the USA, the relevance of Christian eschatology to social and political life. In its discussion of the issue of Christianity and war it breaks new ground. It is very interesting that the jacket bears warm commendations from Paul Scherer and from Reinhold Niebuhr,

the former a pacifist, the latter—well—not. It represents a sort of "post-Niebuhrian" pacifism, in the sense that it reaches in effect a pacifist conclusion, but reaches it in full awareness of all that theological "realism" has said against political, idealist, and legalist pacifism of the pre-atomic variety. This is an important "break" in a stalemated discussion.

If non-pacifists can be got to discuss whether a pacifist judgment might not now be pragmatically derived from their own theological premises; and if pacifists accept that in the field of theological ethics we are not going to set the clock back to liberal idealism—then the stalemate might indeed be broken to very good effect.

But I am not clear on just what ground Mr. Long wants to stand. He admits the pragmatic element in all ethics, including Christian ethics: that is, he agrees that consequences must be calculated as far as they can be calculated. And he is not quite prepared to abandon calculation even at this date:

"We must accept our political responsibility in the present crisis. Perhaps this means continuing the present juggling of power; this is what most observers believe 'responsibility' to be. But perhaps a real responsibility means the paradoxical rejection of calculative politics." (p. 111)

But sometimes the second "perhaps" takes possession of him: calculation is in fact impossible and we must fall back on the ethical "absolute."

"When two nations, both of which are atomically armed, are pitted against each other, a decision for or against the use of the bomb cannot be made on calculative grounds, since none of the historical alternatives are to be preferred over the others. When all considerations except those of ultimate religious obedience are eliminated, it seems that the ultimate principle of love would demand a pacifist position. . . . Pacifism is perhaps the most sensitive Christian position in the immediate situation, and probably the only Christian position in the ultimate issue." (pp. 81–82)

There is a question here. I can understand that a man might say in effect: "The results of atomic war are so incalculable that it is impossible to estimate whether such a war would produce human results worth the human cost. This is altogether too precarious an enterprise morally and practically, and I'll have no hand in it." But this seems to me to be still a pragmatic choice, rather than a falling back upon an ethical absolute. It is of course dependent on "the ultimate principle of love"; but to say that at that point you abandon calculation and think of nothing but "ultimate religious obedience" would seem to imply that the pacifists were right after all when they left calculation out. In other words: can you construe the refusal to choose in the face of incalculable alternatives as a form of ultimate religious obedience—or is it not itself a form of precarious calculation like all moral-pragmatic behaviour?

Mr. Long is a scientist and a theologian. It is probably too much to ask that he should be a literary artist as well. The writing is pretty leaden at times: "The impact of the call to prophesy found most of the Biblical prophets reluctant to assume the task" (p. 75) is not un-typical. One feels that he is arbitrating intelligently and considerately two conflicting points of view; but he is not doing what a more vigorous controversialist might well do some time—and that is, take Scherer and Niebuhr by the scruff of their controversial necks and force them to talk to each other in the light of what Mr. Long has to say.

But the book serves up relevant fact and theological argument in proper proportion and in a new way. And that is a very good service, especially when it is done on the basis of a profound Christian and humane concern.

ALEXANDER MILLER

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MAN. *By David E. Roberts.* New York: Scribners, 1950. 161 pp. $3.00.

The growing number of books in the field of religion and psychiatry not only empha-

size the importance of pastoral work but also have raised some questions about the soundness of the theology employed. Readers of this journal were warned some months ago about the dangers of theological views which reflect clinical observations more than the will of God for man's life. Now David Roberts has brought *psychotherapy* and *a Christian view of man* into sharp focus, and his careful analysis and profound scholarship should clear up many of the foggy areas in our previous discussions. Even without footnotes and within the confines of brevity, this is a carefully written book which ploughs a deep furrow in the fallow ground of modern man's understanding of himself.

Fundamental to every page is the conviction that ". . . a belief cannot be understood apart from that which it means dynamically to the person who holds it." (page 56). Thus for any idea, whether it be theological or philosophical, its significant meaning in operation is directly related to the character structure of the person who holds it. This is one explanation of why the word democracy means so many different things to different people. It suggests that if we are to supplant "invalid beliefs" with "valid beliefs" we must "go beyond logical coherence and intellectual precision" to the emotional significance of a given belief.

The last statement should not be taken to mean that Doctor Roberts has entered a plea against the rational understanding of man's problems. Far from it! His work is based on the conviction that the same light of reasonable analysis which has afforded so many valuable insights in man's understanding of himself also should be applied to his employment of religious beliefs. Aside from education, psychotherapy and religion are the two forces which can assist man to bring forth from within himself the resources for changing the patterns of contemporary civilization. Without these forces and their artful collaboration man stands pathetically alone and divided within himself.

Psychotherapists have discovered that in order to restore health, the conditions of health must be made more attractive than conditions of illness, and the process of therapy must afford the individual a situation in which his defenses and aggressions are no longer necessary, indeed, in which one can be "completely honest with himself and with his fellow human beings." It is possible that the Church could afford such a situation. However in order to do so the Church must get beyond its tendency to keep its members "dependent" as well as beyond its primary concern with self-perpetuation and the eliciting of a "yes" to dogmas rather than an understanding of what is going on at the deepest level. In other words, the churches should certainly be as interested in what its members actually do believe as in what they ought to believe.

It is in his view of the role of the Church, or lack of it, that I find myself in disagreement with Doctor Roberts. Certainly he does recognize that relief from egotism, anxiety, and evil-doing is found in the fellowship of the Christian Church; but the healing and restorative function of that "holy fellowship" and its sacraments are passed over, usually with a negative criticism. Perhaps the Church as we know it deserves such treatment. But I am reminded that every fresh breath of life in the history of Christendom has resulted in a new and vital fellowship where that vitality was nurtured and shared. Indeed, the definition of a dynamic view of salvation which Doctor Roberts puts forth, i.e., one which resolves conflicts, seems impossible apart from a mediating fellowship where healing takes place. The fact that the Christian fellowship has so often failed to be a genuinely healing fellowship is all the more reason why the insights of psychotherapy should be applied to its internal use of symbol, sacrament, and communion.

Doctor Roberts has written an important book in the field of man's understanding of himself and of his ultimate relations to God. Let us hope that the author will

continue to explore this area of dynamic theology.

CHARLES R. STINNETTE, JR.

ROYCE'S SOCIAL INFINITE. *By John E. Smith.* New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1950. 176 pp. $3.75.

Professor Smith's book is a study of Josiah Royce's concept of individuality and community. The central thesis is that community is based upon a process of interpretation, and the heart of the book is a detailed philosophical analysis of the Roycean notion of interpretation. Interpretation is a triadic function in which a third person mediates between two others who could not possibly otherwise attain community.

This presentation of Royce's system is particularly interesting in view of the influence of Martin Buber's treatment of the "I-Thou" relationship on contemporary philosophies of community. Emil Brunner, for instance, has taken Buber's concept, and that of Ferdinand Ebner, as meaning virtually that the only true community is that which exists between two persons, and he has made this idea one of the fundamental principles of his theological system. Professor Smith's study constitutes a much needed reminder that, no matter how desirable the purely personal community may be, such community would very frequently be impossible without the mediating function of the interpreter.

Interpretation refers not only to the world of personal relations. For Royce it has also a metaphysical significance, in that the present interprets the past to the future. Community is distinguished from a mere crowd primarily by the fact that community has a past which is transmitted to the future. The element of the infinite enters into this process by virtue of the fact that each new interpretation becomes itself a sign which requires further interpretation. The function of the prophet is here set forth, then, as one who must "literally discern the *signs* of the times, and perhaps, if he be inspired, even of all time." (p. 90)

Moreover, the special function of the prophet, and of any interpreter, seems to require a certain act of "genius." Royce apparently does not wish to call this element intuition, though recognizing that it is non-discursive. Professor Smith has given a number of fascinating illustrations to show how Royce distinguishes this operation from Bergsonian intuition, but one may feel nevertheless that the line is so fine as to be indistinguishable.

Royce was deeply concerned with interpretation of the Christian faith, and Smith has devoted a large part of his study to "the problem of Christianity" and the Christian view of community. He has reminded us of the problem raised by Royce when he pointed out that "the perennial 'problem' of Christianity is that of achieving some intelligible synthesis between its basic insights and the whole body of 'secular' thought and culture in which the Christian community finds itself at a given time." (p. 111). This of course brings to mind Karl Barth's opposition to any effort to "interpret" the Gospel, lest it be somehow changed in the process.

Inevitably the question must be raised as to whether the process of "interpretation" is a real communication of a living reality, or whether it eventuates in a synthesis, in which the new "sign" is something quite different from that which was to have been interpreted. Royce points to the Holy Spirit as the great interpreter who maintains the continuity of interpretation, effecting a harmony between the new and the old. Without some such factor, the infinite process of interpretation would obviously result in a flux with no visible connection between the present and the past.

Professor Smith's book should encourage Christian scholars to take a new look at

Royce. Contemporary critics have been prone to stigmatize Royce as an Hegelian Idealist, and Smith again makes clear that such an interpretation is erroneous. The book is an excellent illustration of the very interpretative process which constitutes its theme.

JAMES LUTHER MARTIN

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? *By Daniel J. Fleming.* New York: Friendship Press. 183 pp. $2.25.

Here is a volume which the readers of Christianity and Society will find to be of great interest because it is packed full with the practical application of the Frontier Fellowship theology, if there be such. In any event we have here a dynamic, throbbing treatment of the multitudinous problems which beset the Christian missionary abroad against the brilliant background of an experienced and thoroughly consecrated Christian mind. Perhaps no Christian thinker and leader in modern times has had such a profound intellectual influence for good on the course of the foreign missionary cause as has Dr. Fleming. He has produced a phenomenal line of books interpreting the world missionary enterprise with not a poor book in the whole lot. And he has brought always to each book the same thoughtful penetrating Christian insight so valuable and needed in each instant. *What Would You Do?* is no exception to this rule. It is an exciting, graphic and helpful document from its first page to its last.

Filled with interesting "case histories" and decisions which missionaries have actually had to make, the book through its author seeks to look fairly at all sides of every question without giving the impression that the writer has no convictions of his own in the matter. Dr. Fleming very skillfully employs a dialectical Christian approach to highly controversial questions, but you are ever aware of a devoted and sincere dedication to a goal which is Christian. Always there is great honesty of purpose and purity of motive that is able to distinguish the significant from the insignificant, the true from the false.

It is the happy conviction of the author that Christianity is "first of all not an ethic, but a religion". It is something which must be incarnated in life, and deed, each person must be a practising moral agent possessed of integrity and Christian character. There is forever the great need for moral sensitivity, but because life is always complicated absolute choices are seldom open. The suggestion of a cross seems at the heart of every choice. Christian choices will therefore have to be better than secular ones, and pure goals must not be lost sight of. A single case history will illustrate the complexity of the problems with which the book deals, "Fatima, who lived in northern India and had borne no children to her husband, Nazir, suggested that he take a second wife. The new, younger wife became mother of a child. Fatima continued to be a faithful wife, caring for Nazir's old mother, who was blind and crippled, looking after the baby, and in other ways helping the second wife, who was never strong. Fatima was really a household drudge, with little hope of love in her life. In the meantime, Nazir began to listen in the bazaar to a new teaching about a loving and a living Saviour. He bought a Bible, came to an evangelist for instruction, and finally asked for baptism. The missionary in charge made it clear that he could not baptize a man with two wives. Nazir must be put away." It is from the pathos of such situations that Dr. Fleming weaves a fascinatingly helpful Christian dialectic for meeting, if not answering the question of what to do in each case that arises. Without intending to write a book on practical theology, Dr. Fleming has done it and done it in the best way.

Whether he deals with Marriage Customs, Population Problems, Christians as Employers, Unusual Emergency Decisions, or with the broader questions of developing an

Ecumenical Ethic with which the final chapter treats, Dr. Fleming always brings to every problem the redemptive, mature and loving Christian insights which have made his writings invaluable. The missionary abroad will look upon this book as a "must". If I were a foreign missionary, I think I would regard this as a first text. But I venture to say that every minister at home in America would find it more than profitable to read, *What Would You Do?* The book has little that one can hold up for criticism. It has great lessons to teach. It comes close to being a masterpiece of missionary thought.

RALPH H. READ

CALL TO CHRISTIAN ACTION. *By Dores R. Sharpe.* New York: Harper, 1949. 123 pp. $1.50.

For most of the readers of this journal Walter Rauschenbusch is one of the heroes of American Christianity. Although history has shown some of his expectations mistaken and some of his conceptions overly dependent upon certain temporary secular notions of his time, his Social Gospel was a dynamic and liberating movement. It is, therefore, the more embarrassing when someone today echoes Rauschenbusch's teaching entirely without discrimination. It is as though one would try to propagate Augustinianism by repeating exactly the African Saint's ideas, including his views on sex, slavery, and the Bible.

D. R. Sharpe here presents just such an echo of the Social Gospel. Once personal secretary and later biographer of Rauschenbush, he offers a book based on his Rauschenbusch lectures and calling fervently for Christian social action.

Sharpe's theme is the familiar one: if men would live in the spirit of Jesus, the world would be transformed. His method is that of ardent, repeated exhortation. The main villain of the piece is wealth. (Jesus, writes Sharpe, taught that a rich man simply could not enter the kingdom of God; nevertheless Sharpe hopes that a rich man will finance some projects he is advancing.)

Both in his book and in his career Sharpe seems to be identified with all the good causes and to avoid the shady ones that masquerade as liberal. And his simple moral fervor should not be despised by sophisticated theologians in this age when there is too little moral fervor. But too much of the book resembles a phonograph record that got stuck in the decades of the muckrakers and can only reiterate one constant tune.

ROGER L. SHINN

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR. *By George Orwell.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co. 1949. 314 pp. $3.00.

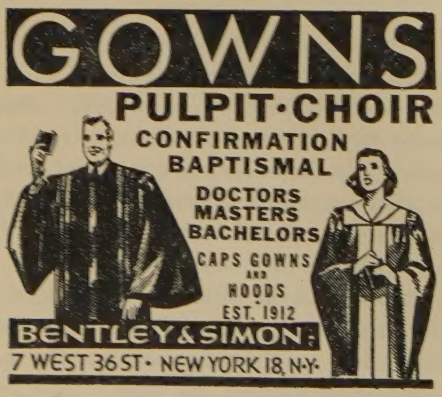
Few readers of this journal will be unfamiliar with this terrifyingly plausible look into a possible future thirty-five years hence. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has received a good deal of publicity and much of it the wrong kind. When *Life* magazine pictorialized it recently, the editors treated the novel as an example of British criticism of the Labour party. This would surely surprise the author. Add to this the accolade of a *Readers' Digest* serialization, and one can imagine that this book, a brilliant critique of totalitarianism, will be used to oppose anything with the faintest touch of government control about it.

To be sure, the book is meant to point to the dangers inherent in present political and economic collectivist trends. But it cannot be construed as laissez-faire propaganda. For the author is criticizing tendencies within a social structure to which he is sympathetic. But it seems almost racially impossible for the American political mind to comprehend the distinctions between our capitalism, British socialism, and Soviet communism aright. So perhaps the book was fated to receive the same misreading in this country as the political position of its author.

It is interesting to note the role of religion in Orwell's Utopia. Is it an accident that the only church mentioned is the deserted one to which Winston and Julia (the hero and the leading lady) repair for a non-political rendezvous? What kind of faith, one might ask after reading this, would be able to hold up against the form of totalitarianism here described? There is a fascinating scene in the book (page 273) that will point to an answer. Winston, having been tortured, is now being grilled by one of the inner party members. He insists that the tyranny cannot go on. Something in the people will rise against it. His questioner asks him what force this will be. "Do you believe in God," he asks. "No," Smith replies, "I believe in the spirit of Man." To refute this humanistic faith, the questioner merely forces Smith to look at his broken, half-dead body in a mirror. "If you believe in Man," he says, "here is your belief." Faith only in man, then, is not the answer.

At two points, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can serve members of the Fellowship as a guide. Orwell vividly exposes the possible dangers of certain political convictions which we hold. Here we may be cautioned. But we may also be stimulated to wonder whether our faith, as it attempts to comprehend 1949, is in reality deep and broad enough for the possible 1984 that Orwell has shown us.

WILLIAM HAMILTON



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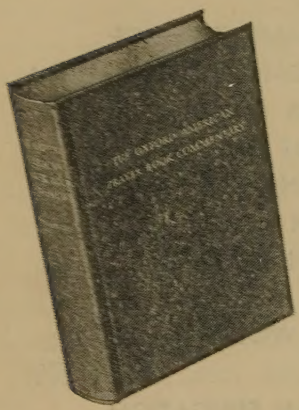

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